

A G E N D A
CITY-COUNTY COMMON MEETING
Tuesday, January 14, 2003 - 8:30 a.m.
County-City Building, Room 113

- I. MINUTES** - Common Meeting on November 12, 2002
- II. 8:30 a.m. ANNUAL WEED REPORT** - Russ Shultz, Weed Superintendent
- III. 8:45 a.m. DEVELOPMENT OF OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION STRATEGIC APPROACH** - Lynn Johnson, Parks & Recreation Director
- IV. 8:50 a.m. DISCUSSION RE: POSSIBILITY OF COMBINING THE CITY AND COUNTY ATTORNEYS' CRIMINAL DIVISIONS** - Dana Roper, City Attorney; Gary Lacey, County Attorney
- V. 9:05 a.m. DISSOLUTION OF CHILDCARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE** - Bonnie Coffey, Executive Director, L-LC Women's Commission; Bruce Dart, Director, L-LC Health Department
- VI. 9:20 a.m. RECORDS MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE/TOWER TRIM** - Gwen Thorpe, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
- VII. 9:35 a.m. CITY COUNCIL/COUNTY BOARD JOINT RECEPTIONIST**
- VIII. 9:50 a.m. ELECTION OF 2003 COMMON CHAIR/VICE CHAIR**
- IX. ADJOURNMENT**

MINUTES
CITY-COUNTY COMMON
Tuesday, January 14, 2003 – 8:30 a.m.
County-City Building, Room 113

County Commissioners Present: Bernie Heier, Common Chair; Deb Schorr, Ray Stevens and Bob Workman **Absent:** Larry Hudkins

City Council Members Present: Ken Svoboda, Common Vice Chair; Jon Camp, Glenn Friendt, Coleen Seng and Terry Werner **Absent:** Jonathan Cook and Annette McRoy

Others Present: Mayor Don Wesely, Mark Bowen, Ann Harrell and Corrie Kielty, Mayor's Office; Kerry Eagan and Gwen Thorpe, County Board Office; Russ Shultz, Weed Superintendent; Lynn Johnson, Parks & Recreation Director; Bonnie Coffey, Women's Commission Executive Director; Gary Lacey, County Attorney; Dana Roper, City Attorney; Terri Storer and John McQuinn, City Attorney's Office; Trish Owen, Deputy County Clerk; Kevin Abourezk, Lincoln Journal Star and Cori Beattie, County Board Secretary

MINUTES

Moved by Seng, seconded by Stevens to approve the minutes of the November 12, 2002 Common meeting. Roll call vote. Ayes: Friendt, Heier, Seng, Stevens, Svoboda, Werner, Workman. Nays: None. Motion passed 7-0. (Wesely and Camp absent for vote. Schorr abstained from voting.)

ANNUAL WEED REPORT

Shultz previously distributed copies of the 2002 Annual Report and Recommendation for the Combined Weed Program. **(See Exhibit A.)** He clarified the Combined Weed Program operates via an interlocal agreement between the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County whereby his department provides inspections for the City's weed abatement program, as well as for noxious weeds within the city limits. He added the number of purple loosestrife violations dramatically decreased. Overall, a total of 5,404 combined weed inspections were made on 2,641 sites.

Weed abatement highlights for the past year included:

- 3,978 inspections on 1,859 sites
- 1,481 violations on 1,059 acres
- 221 sites received multiple complaints
- Sent 697 notices and 891 letters; published 69 notifications; made 59 personal contacts
- 93% of owners cut their overgrowth after notification
- 78 sites were force-cut at a cost of \$14,087
- 50 properties were assessed for non-payment

With regard to noxious weeds, Shultz said 627 infestations were detected on 693 acres. Infestations consisted primarily of musk thistle, purple loosestrife, leafy spurge and Canada thistle. A total of 460 sites were controlled by landowners. The Noxious Weed Authority controlled seven sites, with five being contract-controlled at a cost of \$838 billed to the property owners.

Camp arrived at 8:40 a.m.

Shultz noted there is a continuing emphasis on obtaining voluntary compliance by landowners. Public property owners have responded well. Of 38 public property violations, all were taken care of with the exception of one parcel. He referenced the situation along S. 84th Street just north of Van Dorn - the east side of 84th Street is not located within the city limits, thus, the adjoining landowner is not subject to the City's ordinance.

Shultz noted all information regarding active inspections is available on the Internet.

Recommendations were as follows:

- Multiple Violators: Use faxes instead of letters and legal notices to notify twelve large developers and owners of multiple parcels of weed abatement violations. (Equivalent to 200 notifications in 2002.) Reasoning - cheaper, easier and proposed quicker response time.
- Cutting Height: Change 6" height requirement to 12" prior to 2003 season. Shultz noted he is in the process of preparing a fact sheet for the City Council to initiate this change.

Svoboda said he is pleased to see a decrease in the number of force-cut properties. He is also pleased that Shultz and his staff recognize the need to notify the contractors, as well as the landowners, of weed violations. This definitely helps to expedite the cutting process. Shultz noted in cases of tenant-inhabited properties with violations, notices will be sent to both residents and owners with the hope of getting a better response.

DEVELOPMENT OF OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION STRATEGIC APPROACH

Johnson said a number of studies have been identified in the Comprehensive Plan. A study regarding developing a strategic plan for open space conservation and park planning within Lincoln and Lancaster County is anticipated to begin in March. This effort will be guided by the Salt Valley Heritage Greenway - a new feature of the Comprehensive Plan which solidifies park and open space conservation with floodplain management. The next step is to figure out how to move forward to acquire properties and develop a plan. Johnson estimated the plan to be a 50-year vision.

Johnson indicated that while the Antelope Valley Project creates a hub for the trail system, the Salt Valley Heritage Greenway also connects all the County's trails. In addition, it provides guidance for open space conservation, acquisition of conservation easements and open space in the future, as well as park planning. He emphasized that the Comprehensive Plan states future community parks should be located within the greenway loop.

Beginning in March, community-wide discussions are planned with all groups interested in open space conservation and park planning. This approach is expected to be very

successful in developing a coordinated effort to identify priorities and acquire future conservation easements and park land, as well as funding.

Werner inquired whether it would be possible to reallocate existing road funds to this project. Johnson said that question would need to be addressed with Allan Abbott, Public Works Director. But, the question does bring up an interesting point, as the cooperation between departments such as Public Works, Planning and Parks & Recreation becomes very important. He stressed floodplain/storm water management will also be a key component. It will be important to reinforce to the community that recreation land may be flooded occasionally for storm water management.

Stevens asked if the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board will serve as this effort's main coordinating body. Johnson said this is very much the vision. The Advisory Board will be directly involved and frequently called upon for guidance and support.

As a final comment, Heier pointed out that every roadway map he has seen does not show 98th Street as a through street. He would like that detail corrected on future maps. Johnson said he would look into this concern.

DISCUSSION RE: POSSIBILITY OF COMBINING THE CITY AND COUNTY ATTORNEYS' CRIMINAL DIVISIONS

Heier indicated this item was placed on the agenda at the request of Commissioner Larry Hudkins. Perhaps there may be a cost savings by combining the two offices. Lacey said a study should be performed to see if this is a possibility. Seng asked if combining the offices can legally be done. Roper said the City Charter, as well as some State statutes would need to be changed. He felt it makes more sense to explore this issue once City and County governments have merged.

Friendt asked if both officials were receptive to a study. Lacey said he personally would prefer locating the prosecution of criminal cases in one place. With the current arrangement, it becomes confusing for someone wanting to pay a simple speeding ticket. He added that over time, there may be some cost savings realized by cycling through attorneys. There would also be pension portability questions.

Friendt inquired about the cost of such a study. Roper said a study was done in 1973 by Arthur Little. It look at combining various City and County functions, although, he was unsure of the study's cost.

Roper said the bottom line is saving tax dollars and he questioned whether or not this would happen by combining the offices. The Omaha City Attorney currently handles all misdemeanors. The Lincoln City Attorney could do the same thing. But, since the City handles twice as many cases as the County, additional prosecutors would be necessary. While this would simply rearrange cases and attorneys, Roper indicated he would be open to a study. He reiterated that it may be better to combine the offices once a City and County merger is planned. Friendt said unless there is a compelling need to combine these offices in the near future, the City and County may not want to spend thousands of dollars on a study. Lacey said the need for the study is really the governing bodies' call.

Wesely arrived at 9:00 a.m.

Camp said there will ultimately be a City and County merger in the future, though, the time frame is unknown. Werner said perhaps a study should focus on merging the City and County versus just two departments. Camp asked if the Little study included any projections. Roper said he didn't recall it including a specific time frame.

Seng said former County Commissioner Kathy Campbell provided her with a list of all the City and County interlocal agreements regarding joint departments/agencies. She noted local government has made a valiant attempt at cooperation throughout the years. Officials should continue to explore a merger of City and County government as it would eventually benefit the taxpayers.

Lacey noted another concern is that until the two political entities are merged, the possibility exists that one could sue the other. Roper said the City also does not have jury trials. If merged, City cases would have jury trials, thus, the potential need for more public defenders.

Heier said it may be more appropriate to discuss at a future Common meeting a study on merging City and County government versus the City and County Attorneys' offices.

DISSOLUTION OF CHILDCARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Coffey stated the Childcare Advisory Committee (CAC) was formed in 1983 by an interlocal agreement between the City and County. Early last year, the Women's Commission was approached to take over the CAC as a result of its involvement with the Community Services Implementation Project (CSIP). Coffey indicated she chairs CSIP's Early Childhood Needs Development Coalition and noticed this group was beginning to do the same things as the CAC. She met with Bruce Dart, Director of the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department, to discuss how to approach this concern and they decided it may be time to disband the CAC with its responsibilities continuing under the auspices of the Early Childhood Coalition (ECC).

A meeting was held with the Joint Budget Committee in November to discuss the disbanding of the CAC. JBC members were supportive. Letters were sent to all CAC members notifying them of the change and thanking them for their involvement with the ECC. No negative comments were received regarding the change. Therefore, Coffey said a resolution will soon be introduced to the City Council calling for the disbandment of the CAC.

Werner inquired if any cost savings to the City or County will be realized in disbanding the CAC. Coffey said it was a strictly voluntary organization, although, the Health Department did provide a staff person's time. Any cost savings would be minimal.

Friendt complimented the process even though there will not be a big cost savings. He felt it was refreshing to see concepts evolve as situations and times change. Stevens added this vision is reflective of the preliminary success of the CSIP process - looking for better coordinated and collaborative ways of doing things in the community.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE/TOWER TRIM

By direction of the Chair, this item was removed from the agenda.

CITY COUNCIL/COUNTY BOARD JOINT RECEPTIONIST

Heier said the County Board has been discussing its current staffing situation. The idea of a joint City Council/County Board receptionist was brought up. Werner asked if the Board thought this was a good idea, as the City Council has not addressed the issue. Seng said the new space needs ten-year master plan included a joint reception area. She was receptive to discussing the possibility of implementing a joint person sooner. Friendt figured a joint receptionist would offer better efficiency and accessibility to the public.

Seng mentioned a recent incident where someone walked into the County-City Building who had a few too many drinks. Cori Beattie, County Board Secretary, called security on her way out of the office. Sheriff's deputies ended up speaking with the Council staff since Cori was away from her desk. Seng said this incident made her think that a common reception area would be beneficial.

Camp noted the County is more subject to walk-ins since their offices are located by the front door. He said a joint position makes sense as a means of gaining more efficiency for both the public and the City Council/County Board staffs. Stevens added a joint position may show future cost savings in serving as a back up to both the County Board and City Council staffs, thus, eliminating the need for temporary employees or future additional permanent positions.

Workman said the Board thought about possibly closing off its entrance and making it an exit only. The information booth could then be relocated just outside this area. He added the County Board also discussed the idea of hiring another person, though, a decision has been delayed due to budget constraints. He admitted it is very difficult for one person, in this case the Board's secretary, to handle the phone, walk-ins and all the other responsibilities of the position. A joint person could provide relief for both staffs.

Stevens said closing off the County Board's doors and relocating the information desk would greatly reduce the number of walk-ins. The doors could also remain entry accessible as the information desk would act as a barrier to the public. Also, the joint reception area could be placed outside the Council doors by simply extending the space adjacent to the stairway. Stevens feels implementing these changes could be done with minimal construction costs. Svoboda noted the space needs master plan shows the Council's office space expanding into the area next to the stairwell. It also recommended moving the information desk to the office across the hall from the County Board office. He feels the concept is in motion, it's just a matter of seeing what works best and in what time frame.

Werner asked if the joint position would be purely a receptionist as their current staff people have additional responsibilities. Beattie suggested officials consider a "position" versus a "title." She envisioned a joint employee being far more than a receptionist. The person could be cross-trained to do any/all duties currently performed by the City Council's and County Board's staff people in order to cover for vacations, sick leave, etc.

Camp said this item could be brought up at today's Public Building Commission (PBC) meeting as it may be beneficial to add the position sooner than what the master plan recommends.

Seng moved that the City Council and County Board explore the idea of a joint receptionist and place this person in the hallway in front of the City Council doors; seconded by Werner. Camp suggested a few language changes. Seng asked him re-word the motion.

Camp moved that the City Council and County Board explore a new, joint position with the understanding that the individual would be physically located in the area currently in front of the City Council doors. Werner agreed to the amended version, as did Seng.

On a related note, Werner said he realized after last night's City Council meeting just how vulnerable the parking garage is with the doors located by the front entrance to the County-City Building.

Werner said it also occurred to him that the Board's secretary is currently handling all the receptionist and administrative duties for the County and perhaps the City should discuss whether or not it needs two people. Perhaps the three existing positions could do the job without the need to hire an additional employee. Friendt agreed this option is worth reviewing. Staff should take a look at their duties to help determine whether there is even a need for an additional part or full-time position.

Camp asked that this item be placed on the next Common meeting agenda. In the interim, each body can discuss the various aspects of a joint position, including financial, personnel, and physical location concerns.

Roll call vote on amended motion. Ayes: Camp, Friendt, Heier, Schorr, Seng, Stevens, Svoboda, Werner and Workman. Nays: None. Motion passed 9-0. (Wesely absent for vote.)

Seng suggested Beattie meet with the City Council staff to discuss and document potential challenges of a joint position. Heier asked the Council to alert their staff of this meeting.

ELECTION OF 2003 COMMON CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

First, Heier thanked the body for its cooperative effort in making his tenure as Common Chair very easy and for attending the meetings in a timely fashion. He said a number of difficult decisions were reached last year with regard to the Comprehensive Plan. As Common Chair, he appreciated the fact that the process ran very smoothly.

Heier opened the floor for nominations for 2003 Common Chair. Seng nominated Ken Svoboda; seconded by Werner. Roll call vote. Ayes: Friendt, Heier, Schorr, Seng, Stevens, Svoboda, Werner, Workman and Camp. Nays: None. Motion passed 9-0. (Wesely absent for vote.)

Svoboda opened the floor for nominations for 2003 Common Vice Chair. Workman nominated Ray Stevens; seconded by Seng. Roll call vote. Ayes: Heier, Schorr, Seng, Svoboda, Werner, Workman, Camp and Friendt. Nays: None. Motion passed 8-0. (Stevens abstained from voting; Wesely was absent for vote.)

FUTURE MEETING DATE

The next City-County Common meeting was scheduled for Monday, February 10, 2003 immediately following the joint LPS/City/County meeting which will begin at 7:30 a.m. Both meetings will be held in Room 113 of the County-City Building. Agenda items can be forwarded to the City Council office.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m.

Submitted by,

Cori R. Beattie
County Board Secretary

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